

NSG-494

HIDATSA SYNTAX

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CR-59828

(NASA CR OR TMX OR AD NUMBER)

(THRU)

None

(CODE)

(CATEGORY)

PREFACE

This study of the syntax of Hidatsa was carried out for two purposes. One was to find out to what extent the concepts of generative grammar – developed on the basis of Indo-European languages and for the most part on the basis of English – would apply to a rather different type of language. The other purpose for this study was to find out how much could be discovered of the generative grammar of a language which is not the investigator's native language. The answers to these questions, of course, have considerable influence upon each other: It is only to the extent that it is possible to work out a large portion of the grammar of a language, that it can be a fair test of the details of a theory of linguistic structure. However, I do have enough confidence now in the accuracy of what I have included in this work to warrant its publication; this grammar gives an intuitively satisfying analysis of most of the sentences that appear in both my own corpus and in previously published Hidatsa material. However, those sentences which still resist analysis, when they are better understood, might very well require changes in parts of the grammar that are included here. This very thing has occasionally happened as my knowledge of Hidatsa improved.

The answer to the first of these questions, i.e., to what extent generative grammar provides a proper framework for non-Indo-European languages – or, at least, for Siouan languages – is most satisfying. In particular, I feel that viewing Hidatsa from this point of view has led me to solutions of a number of puzzling problems that Siouanists have always faced: the relationship between active

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and stative verbs, the different orders of, and placement of, verb prefixes that occur in different types of constructions, the rules that govern whether the plurality of a noun is marked as a suffix of the noun or as a suffix of the associated verb, in what sense may nouns and postpositions function as verbs, the relationship between the subjects of stative verbs and goal phrases used as objects, and the relationship between alienable and inalienable possession. In addition, this framework has facilitated discovery of previously unnoticed features of the structure of Siouan languages: the distinction between goal phrases used as objects and object nouns, and the lack of a true ergative relation. Of course, these problems have been solved here only for Hidatsa, but cursory examination of Crow, Mandan, and Dakota suggests that these features in Hidatsa also occur in only slightly different form in the other Siouan languages.

Concerning the other problem – that of the inherent ability of discovering the grammar of a language not one's own – as I have indicated above, I feel that the accuracy of this grammar of Hidatsa has increased with my knowledge of the language. This fact, as well as both my own work and the work of others on English leads me to expect that only one who speaks the language 'like a native' can ever hope to give an exhaustive account of the structure of that language. However, I have found that, after a few false starts, my increasing knowledge of Hidatsa has led to further elaboration of already grossly formulated constructions rather than to complete reformulations of the whole grammar. I now feel that most of the present lack in my understanding of Hidatsa structure concerns low-level features of the grammar rather than the basic over-all structure of the language.

← In the discussion that follows, grammar rules and examples are numbered according to the chapter and section in which they occur. Grammar rules have Arabic numerals, examples have Roman numerals. Thus, rule 5.3.2 is the second rule in Chapter 5, section 3. When referring to a rule or example within a chapter, but in a different section from the one in which the reference occurs, both the rule and section number will be given. When the item referred

to occurs in a different chapter, the chapter, section, and rule numbers will be given. Thus, for example, a reference in chapter 2 to rule 3.5 will apply to rule 5 in section 3 of that chapter; a reference to rule 3.3.5 will apply to rule 5 in section 3 of chapter 3.

I should like here to thank Zellig S. Harris for making it possible for me to give a series of lectures based upon this grammar at the University of Pennsylvania, and for the many fruitful discussions I had with those who attended these lectures, especially Lila Gleitman, Anatol W. Holt, James Munz, and Carlota S. Smith. An early draft of the manuscript was read by Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle, and I gratefully acknowledge their penetrating criticisms and suggestions for its improvement. I wish also to acknowledge the many suggestions made by John Viertel, Carlota S. Smith, and Clifford F. Greene, Jr., for clarifying many passages in the text and improving its style.

This work was supported in part by the U. S. Army, Navy, and Air Force under Contract DA36-039-AMC-03200(E); in part by the National Science Foundation (Grant GP-2495), the National Institutes of Health (Grant MH-04737-04), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Grant NsG-496).

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